

# **WEST VIRGINIA LEGISLATURE**

## **2024 REGULAR SESSION**

**Introduced**

### **House Bill 5369**

By Delegate Dillon

[Introduced January 30, 2024; Referred to the  
Committee on Political Subdivisions then Government  
Organization then Finance]

1 A BILL to amend and reenact §12-4-14 of the Code of West Virginia, 1931, as amended, relating to  
 2 the West Virginia Grant Transparency and Accountability Act; requiring corporate entities  
 3 and any government agency, political subdivision, nongovernmental organization, or other  
 4 organization receiving taxpayer funds greater than \$1,000 dollars in any fiscal year from  
 5 any source to enroll in West Virginia Open Checkbook and fully disclose their revenues  
 6 and expenditures and to be subject to compliance with the Freedom of Information Act;  
 7 authorizing government authorities and agencies to become advisories with powers of  
 8 study and reporting to governing authorities; when certain projects require a ballot  
 9 initiative; and requiring disclosure of applicants who respond to a request for proposal to  
 10 the public before the final selection occurs.

*Be it enacted by the Legislature of West Virginia:*

**ARTICLE 4. ACCOUNTS, REPORTS, AND GENERAL PROVISIONS.**

**§12-4-14. West Virginia Grant Transparency and Accountability Act; Accountability of grantees receiving state funds or grants, procedures, reporting, auditing, investigations, and recovery; sworn statements by volunteer fire departments; rule making, criminal penalties.**

1 (a) This section may be cited as The West Virginia Grant Transparency and Accountability  
 2 Act. The West Virginia Grant Transparency and Accountability Act is intended to develop a  
 3 coordinated, nonredundant process for the effective oversight and monitoring of grant recipients,  
 4 thereby ensuring quality programs and limiting fraud, waste, and abuse.

5 (b) For the purposes of this section:

6 ~~(1)~~ "Grantor" means a state spending unit awarding a state grant.

7 ~~(2)~~ "Grantee" means any entity receiving a state grant, including a state spending unit,  
 8 local government, corporation, partnership, association, individual, or other legal entity.

9           ~~(3)~~ "Subgrantee" means an entity, including a state spending unit, local government,  
10 corporation, partnership, association, individual, or other legal entity, who receives grant money  
11 from a grantee who was awarded a state grant.

12           ~~(4)~~ "Report" means an engagement, such as an agreed-upon procedures engagement or  
13 other attestation engagement, performed and prepared by a certified public accountant to test  
14 whether state grants were spent as intended. The term "report" does not mean a full-scope audit or  
15 review of the person receiving state funds.

16           ~~(5)~~ "State grant" means funding provided by a state spending unit, regardless of the  
17 original source of the funds, to a grantee upon application for a specific purpose. The term "state  
18 grant" does not include: (A) Payments for goods and services purchased by a state spending unit;  
19 (B) compensation to state employees and public officials; (C) reimbursements to state employees  
20 and public officials for travel or incidental expenses; (D) grants of student aid; (E) government  
21 transfer payments; (F) direct benefits provided under state insurance and welfare programs; (G)  
22 funds reimbursed to a person for expenditures made for qualified purposes when receipts for the  
23 expenditures are required prior to receiving the funds; (H) retirement benefits; and (I) federal pass-  
24 through funds that are subject to the federal Single Audit Act Amendments of 1996, 31 U.S.C. §  
25 7501 *et seq.* The term "state grant" does not include formula distributions to volunteer and part-  
26 volunteer fire departments and fire companies made pursuant to §33-3-14d, §33-3-33, §33-12C-7  
27 of this code and does not include money received from the Fire Service Equipment and Training  
28 Fund as provided in §29-3-5f of this code.

29           ~~(6)~~ "West Virginia debarred list" means the list maintained by the State Auditor that  
30 contains the names of individuals and entities that are ineligible, either temporarily or permanently,  
31 from receiving an award of grant funds from the state.

32           (7) "State Auditor" means the State Auditor of West Virginia, by himself or herself, or by any  
33 person appointed, designated, or approved by the State Auditor to perform the service.

34           (8) "Stop payment order" means a communication from the state grant-making agency to

35 the State Auditor and the State Treasurer, following procedures by the State Auditor, causing the  
36 cessation of payments to a grantee or subgrantee as a result of the grantee or subgrantee's failure  
37 to comply with one or more terms of the grant or subgrant, violations of law, or the initiation of an  
38 audit or investigation.

39 ~~(9)~~ "Stop payment procedure" means the procedure created by the State Auditor which  
40 effects a stop payment order or the lifting of a stop payment order.

41 (c)(1) Any grantee who receives one or more state grants in the amount of \$50,000 or more  
42 in the aggregate in a state's fiscal year shall file with the grantor and the State Auditor a report of  
43 the disbursement of the state grant funds. When the grantor causes an audit, by an independent  
44 certified public accountant, to be conducted of the grant funds, the audit is performed using  
45 generally accepted government auditing standards, and a copy of the audit is available for public  
46 inspection, no report is required to be filed under this section. An audit performed that complies  
47 with Office of Management and Budget circular A-133, and submitted within the period provided in  
48 this section may be substituted for the report.

49 (2) Any grantee who receives a state grant in an amount less than \$50,000 or who is not  
50 required to file a report because an audit has been conducted or substituted as provided by  
51 subdivision (1) of this subsection shall file with the grantor and State Auditor a sworn statement of  
52 expenditures made under the grant.

53 (3) *Subgrant of grant funds* – If any grantee obtains grant funds and grants any part or all of  
54 those funds to a subgrantee for a specific purpose or purposes, the granted funds shall be treated  
55 as a state grant.

56 (4) Reports and sworn statements of expenditures required by this section shall be filed  
57 within two years of the end of the grantee's fiscal year in which the disbursement of state grant  
58 funds by the grantor was made. The report shall be made by an independent certified public  
59 accountant at the cost of the grantee. State grant funds may be used to pay for the report if the  
60 applicable grant provisions allow. The scope of the report is limited to showing that the state grant

61 funds were spent for the purposes intended when the grant was made.

62 (5) ~~In the event~~ If the State Auditor determines that applicable reporting or record keeping  
63 provisions for state grants are delinquent or not in compliance with this code, the State Auditor  
64 shall notify the State Treasurer and no further grant funds appropriated to the grantor agency  
65 under the specific grant shall be encumbered or expended until such time as the State Auditor  
66 determines that all applicable reporting or record keeping provisions are brought into compliance:  
67 *Provided*, That such suspension of funding does not violate federal law or regulations or  
68 unreasonably prevent or detrimentally impact the ability of the agency to receive federal support or  
69 funding.

70 (6) Each State grant-making agency shall designate a Chief Accountability Officer, to the  
71 extent possible from within its existing staff, who shall serve as a liaison to the State Auditor and  
72 shall be responsible for the state agency's implementation of and compliance with the law, rules,  
73 and terms of grants. Such position may be held concurrently with any other designated position.

74 (d)(1) Grantor agencies or the State Auditor shall issue stop payment orders for failure to  
75 file required reports. Any grantee failing to file a required report or sworn statement of  
76 expenditures within the two-year period as provided in this section for state grant funds is barred  
77 from subsequently receiving state grants until the grantee has filed the report or sworn statement  
78 of expenditures and is otherwise in compliance with the provisions of this section.

79 (2) Any grantor of a state grant shall report any grantee failing to file a required report or  
80 sworn statement of expenditures within the required period provided in this section to the State  
81 Auditor for purposes of debarment from receiving state grants.

82 (3) The State Auditor shall maintain a searchable and publicly accessible database listing  
83 all awarded state grants. All grantors shall provide a list of grantees and subgrantees to the State  
84 Auditor and all other information regarding grant funds and grantees as required by law or rule.

85 (e)(1) The state agency administering the state grant shall notify the grantee of the  
86 reporting requirements set forth in this section.

87 (2) All grantors awarding state grants shall, prior to awarding a state grant verify that the  
88 grantee is not barred from receiving state grants pursuant to this section. The verification process  
89 shall, at a minimum, include:

90 (A) A requirement that the grantee seeking the state grant provide a sworn statement from  
91 an authorized representative that the grantee has filed all reports and sworn statements of  
92 expenditures for state grants received as required under this section; and

93 (B) Confirmation from the State Auditor by the grantor that the grantee has not been  
94 identified as one who has failed to file a report or sworn statement of expenditures under this  
95 section. Confirmation may be accomplished by accessing the computerized database  
96 provided for in this section.

97 (3) If any report or sworn statement of expenditures submitted pursuant to the  
98 requirements of this section provides evidence of a reportable condition or violation, the grantor  
99 shall provide a copy of the report or sworn statement of expenditures to the State Auditor within 30  
100 days of receipt by the grantor.

101 (4) The grantor and State Auditor shall maintain copies of reports and sworn statements of  
102 expenditures required by this section and make the reports or sworn statements of expenditures  
103 available for public inspection, as well as for use in audits and performance reviews of the grantor.

104 (5) *Stop payment procedures* – The State Auditor, in cooperation with state grant-making  
105 agencies, shall promulgate legislative, procedural, and interpretive rules in accordance with the  
106 provisions of §29A-3-1 *et seq.* of this code in implementing the provisions of this section which  
107 shall include, but not be limited to:

108 (A) Procedures concerning issuing and lifting stop payments and other corrective actions;

109 (B) Factors to be considered in determining whether to issue a stop payment order  
110 including whether or not a stop payment order is in the best interest of the state;

111 (C) Factors to be considered in determining whether a stop payment order should be lifted;

112 and

113 (D) Procedures for notification to the grantee or subgrantee of the issuance of a stop  
114 payment order, the lifting of a stop payment order, and any other related information.

115 (6) *Informal Conference* – Whenever a grantor agency reasonably believes that grant  
116 funds are subject to recovery, the grantor agency shall provide the grantee the opportunity for at  
117 least one informal conference to determine the facts and issues and to resolve any conflicts before  
118 taking any formal recovery actions.

119 (7) *Formal Procedures for Recovery* –

120 (A) If a grantor agency determines that certain grant funds are to be recovered, then, prior  
121 to taking any action to recover the grant funds, the grantor agency shall provide the grantee of the  
122 funds a written notice of the intended recovery. This notice shall identify the funds and the amount  
123 to be recovered and the specific facts which permit recovery.

124 (B) A grantee shall have 35 days from the receipt of the notice required in paragraph (A) of  
125 this subdivision to return the grant funds or request a hearing in writing to show why recovery is not  
126 justified or proper.

127 (C) If a grantee requests a hearing pursuant to paragraph (B) of this subdivision, then:

128 (i) The hearing shall be conducted under §29A-5-1 *et seq.* of this code, and be presided  
129 over by the grantor agency head or their designee;

130 (ii) The grantor agency shall hold the hearing at which the grantee or designated  
131 representative may present evidence and witnesses to show why recovery should not be  
132 permitted; and

133 (iii) After the conclusion of the hearing, the grantor agency shall make a final decision and  
134 issue a written final recovery order in compliance with §29A-5-3 of this code and send a copy of the  
135 order to the grantee and the State Auditor.

136 (D)(i) If a grantee requests a hearing pursuant to paragraph (B) of this subdivision then the  
137 grantor agency may not take any action of recovery until at least 35 days after the grantor agency  
138 has issued a final recovery order pursuant to the requirements of paragraph (C) of this subdivision.

139 (ii) If a grantee does not return the grant funds or request a hearing as permitted in  
140 paragraph (B) of this subdivision, then the grantor agency may proceed with recovery of the grant  
141 funds identified in the notice issued pursuant to the requirements of paragraph (A) of this  
142 subdivision, at any time after the expiration of the 35 day request period established in paragraph  
143 (B) of this subdivision.

144 (8) *Recovery of Grant Funds by Grantor Agency* – Any grant funds which have been  
145 misspent or are being improperly held are subject to recovery by the grantor agency which made  
146 the grant. The grantor agency making the grant shall take affirmative and timely action to recover  
147 all misspent or improperly held grant funds. In order to effectuate the recovery of such grant funds,  
148 the grantor agency making the grant may use any one or a combination of the following:

149 (A) Offset the amounts against existing grants or future grants to be made by the grantor  
150 agency making the recovery;

151 (B) Request offsets of the amounts from existing grants or future grants to be made by  
152 other grantor agencies;

153 (C) Initiate any debt collection method authorized by law against any private person,  
154 business, or entity;

155 (D) Remove the grantee from the grantor agency's programs and debar the grantee's  
156 participation in future grant programs for a period not to exceed three years or until removed from  
157 the debarred list; or

158 (E) Request further action under subdivision (9) of this subsection to recover grant funds  
159 and otherwise enforce all applicable laws.

160 (9) *Recovery of State Grant Funds* – The Attorney General, independently or on behalf of  
161 the State Auditor, may take any action within his or her authority to recover any grant funds which  
162 have been misapplied or are being improperly held and have all the powers of collection  
163 established in this act in addition to any other powers authorized by law, including, without  
164 limitation, to file lawsuits to recover grant funds.



165 (10) All grant funds, whose use is not restricted by law or otherwise appropriated, which  
166 are recovered by the grantor, or State Auditor, and expired or unexpended grant funds remaining  
167 at grant completion or termination, shall be deposited in a special revenue fund, which is hereby  
168 created and established in the State Treasury to be known as the Grant Recovery Fund. The  
169 moneys in the fund, with all interest or other earnings thereon, shall be expended only upon  
170 appropriation by the Legislature.

171 (11) The State Auditor has authority to promulgate procedural and interpretive rules and  
172 propose legislative rules for promulgation in accordance with the provisions of §29A-3-1 *et seq.* of  
173 this code to assist in implementing the provisions of this section. The rules shall set forth uniform  
174 administrative requirements and reporting procedures for state grants and subgrants to ensure  
175 compliance. State granting agencies shall not impose additional or inconsistent requirements  
176 unless specifically required by state or federal law.

177 (12) *Conflicts of interest* – The State Auditor shall adopt rules regarding conflict of interest  
178 policies for state grants. Grantors, grantees, and subgrantees must disclose in writing any  
179 potential conflicts of interest to the grant applicant prior to awarding the grant.

180 (f)(1) Any state agency administering a state grant shall, in the manner designated by  
181 the State Auditor, notify the State Auditor of the maximum amount of funds to be disbursed, the  
182 identity of the grantee authorized to receive the funds, the grantee's fiscal year and federal  
183 employer identification number, and the purpose and nature of the state grant within 30 days of  
184 making the state grant or authorizing the disbursement of the funds, whichever is later.

185 (2) The State Treasurer shall provide the Legislative Auditor the information concerning  
186 formula distributions to volunteer and part-volunteer fire departments, made pursuant to §33-3-  
187 14d, §33-3-33, and §33-12C-7 of this code, the Legislative Auditor requests, and in the manner  
188 designated by the Legislative Auditor.

189 (3) The State Auditor shall maintain a debarred list identifying grantees who have failed to  
190 file reports and sworn statements required by this section. The list shall be in the form of a

191 computerized database that shall be accessible by state agencies and the public over the Internet,  
192 unless public disclosure would violate federal law or regulations.

193 (g) An audit of state grant funds may be authorized at any time by the Joint Committee on  
194 Government and Finance to be conducted by the State Auditor in cooperation with the Legislative  
195 Auditor at no cost to the grantee.

196 (h) Any report submitted pursuant to the provisions of this section may be filed  
197 electronically in accordance with the provisions of §39A-1-1 *et seq.* of this code.

198 (i) Any grantee who files a fraudulent sworn statement of expenditures under subsection  
199 (b) of the section, a fraudulent sworn statement under subsection (d) of this section, or a fraudulent  
200 report under this section is guilty of a felony and, upon conviction thereof, shall be fined not less  
201 than \$1,000 nor more than \$5,000 or imprisoned in a state correctional facility for not less than one  
202 year nor more than five years, or both fined and imprisoned.

203 (j) *Prohibition on use of grant funds for prohibited political activity –*

204 (1) For the purpose of this section, "prohibited political activity" means activity directed  
205 toward the success or failure of a political party, candidate for political office, or ballot issue, and  
206 includes, without limitation, express advocacy for the election or defeat of a political party,  
207 candidate, or ballot issue.

208 (2) Grantors, grantees, subgrantees, and personnel thereof shall not knowingly use grant  
209 funds, or goods or services purchased with grant funds, to engage, either directly or indirectly, in a  
210 prohibited political activity.

211 (3) Grantors, grantees, subgrantees and personnel thereof shall not be knowingly  
212 compensated from grant funds for time spent engaging in a prohibited political activity.

213 (4) Nothing in this section shall prohibit any organization described in 26 U.S.C. § 501(c)(3)  
214 or 26 U.S.C. § 501(c)(4) receiving a grant from the state from engaging in any federally  
215 permissible activity regarding advocacy, indirect and direct lobbying, and political activity, provided  
216 that the specific funds acquired by a grant from the state or grantor shall not be used for those

217 activities that are permitted by federal law but prohibited by this section.

218 (5) A grantor, grantee, subgrantee, or personnel thereof who knowingly uses grant funds  
219 for prohibited political activity in violation of this section is guilty of a felony and, upon conviction  
220 thereof, shall be fined not less than \$1,000 nor more than \$5,000 or imprisoned in a state  
221 correctional facility for not less than one year nor more than five years, or both fined and  
222 imprisoned.

223 (k) *Reporting* – Effective on or before December 31, 2022 and every three years thereafter,  
224 the State Auditor shall submit to the Joint Legislative Committee on Government and Finance a  
225 report that demonstrates the efficiencies, cost savings, and reductions in fraud, waste and abuse.  
226 The report shall include, but not be limited to, facts describing:

227 (1) The number and names of entities placed on the West Virginia Debarred List;

228 (2) The number of stop payment orders issued to grantees;

229 (3) Any savings realized as a result of the implementation of this act;

230 (4) A statement of funds recovered and funds in the recovery process;

231 (5) Any reductions in the number of duplicative audit report reviews; and

232 (6) The overall number of state grants awarded that given year and the total amount of  
233 dollars awarded by each state agency.

234 (l) *Additional requirements:*

235 (1) Any corporate entity, government agency, political subdivision, nongovernmental  
236 organization, or other organization receiving taxpayer funds greater than \$1,000 dollars in any  
237 fiscal year from local, state, or federal sources, whether directly or indirectly, shall enroll in West  
238 Virginia Open Checkbook and fully disclose their revenues and expenditures.

239 (2) Any corporate entity, government agency, political subdivision, nongovernmental  
240 organization, or other organization receiving taxpayer funds greater than \$1,000 dollars in any  
241 fiscal year from local, state, or federal sources, whether directly or indirectly, shall be subject to  
242 compliance with the freedom of information act under §29B-1-1 et seq. of this code.

243 (3) Authorities such as the West Virginia Economic Development Authority and other such  
244 agencies or governing authorities of municipalities and counties shall become advisories with  
245 powers of study and reporting to governing authorities.

246 (A) Advisories may not own real property or conduct business binding to the governing  
247 authority.

248 (B) An Advisory shall operate under the clear authority of either the city council or the  
249 county commission. If an advisory operates strictly within a municipality the city council shall be  
250 the de facto governing authority.

251 (4) All applicants who respond to a Request for Proposal (RFP) shall be disclosed to the  
252 public before the final selection occurs, with a period of two weeks for public comment prior to any  
253 decision being rendered. The disclosure shall include the applicants and the information provided  
254 in each proposal.

NOTE: The purpose of this bill is to amend the West Virginia Grant Transparency and Accountability Act, among other additions, requiring corporate entities and any government agency, political subdivision, nongovernmental organization, or other organization receiving taxpayer funds greater than \$1,000 dollars in any fiscal year from any source to enroll in West Virginia Open Checkbook and fully disclose their revenues and expenditures and to be subject to compliance with the Freedom of Information Act.

Strike-throughs indicate language that would be stricken from a heading or the present law and underscoring indicates new language that would be added.